

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Are You Going To Eat That? *What You Can Do To Reduce Food Waste*

How much food do you waste in a year? According to a recent article by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the average American throws away more than 200 pounds of food each year. Maybe that doesn't sound like much individually, but it adds up. In fact, in 2010, more than 34 million tons of food was wasted in the United States alone. That's a lot of food! There are so many things we can do to reduce the waste and even save money while doing it. Here is some food for thought.

- **Think before you buy** – Plan out your weekly meals, create a shopping list and try not to buy more than you can use before it starts to spoil. Why buy something that you're just going to end up throwing away?
- **Be creative** – Be an "Iron Chef" in the kitchen! Take a look through the refrigerator to determine what needs to go and whip up a tasty stirfry or soup. It can be an adventure to take one ingredient, look up recipes for that ingredient and build a meal around it.
- **Use your freezer** – If you just can't bear to eat the last of the leftovers, stick them in the freezer and pull them out when you need to grab a quick lunch for work. Blanch and freeze fresh produce if you won't have the chance to eat it before it goes bad.
- **Smaller portions** – Serve smaller portions at home, you can always go back for more. When dining out, request smaller portions. Restaurants may offer half-portioned upon request at reduced prices. If you have leftovers, freeze them if you don't want to eat them right away. Approximately half of Americans take leftovers home from restaurants, let's get those numbers up! And once you get the leftovers home, be sure to eat them!
- **Donate** – Non-perishable items and unspoiled perishable items are greatly appreciated at food banks, pantries and soup kitchens. Take a look through your canned goods and if there are items that are still good, but you just never seem to use, donate them. Maybe you had a large party or wedding and there was more food leftover than you can consume, call your local food pantry or soup kitchen and ask them if they would like it.
- **Compost** – Ok, so that neglected pepper in the back corner of the vegetable drawer is beyond use. Now what do you do with it? You can add it to your compost bin. Composting is a great way to get rid of that pepper or any other neglected vegetable or leftover. Composting is easy and can be fun. When your compost bin is managed properly, the food waste breaks down to a nutrient rich soil additive that helps flower and vegetable gardens and even house plants thrive.

These are just a few simple ways to reduce food waste. Here's a final thought from a poster at a dining hall: It takes 75 days to grow a carrot and only 2 seconds to throw it away. Don't throw it away! Eat it, donate it or compost it!

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